

An integrated response to risks of violence against bus drivers

When on-board assaults affect safety on our roads

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AN INTEGRATED RESPONSE TO RISKS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST BUS DRIVERS: WHEN ON-BOARD ASSAULTS AFFECT SAFETY ON OUR ROADS

SHANE STOCKILL & ROBYN LINCOLN

***paper to be presented to the
Australasian Road Safety Conference,
Gold Coast, 14-16 October 2015***

Recent Queensland research has established that incidents of client-initiated aggression on public transport are far from rare and that these events can significantly impact driver safety, compromise passenger well-being and can create dangers for other road users. These data, for the first time, reveal that there are patterns to incidents of on-board aggression, and point to a need for a broader approach to respond to such incidents. This research evidence provides a sound base to advance an integrated policy framework, and informs a collaborative approach to address bus driver violence.

Emerging patterns of aggression and violence on Australian public transport suggest violence hot spots exist in most states, across public transport modes, times and routes, with aggression towards drivers frequently escalating in intensity. Risks to driver safety commonly arise from client expectations and anti-social behaviours. Contributing factors include the broader operating environment, such as increased traffic density and acts of 'road rage' from the interplay between public transport and other road users, and pose road safety concerns. Consideration of these broader risk factors will inform effective responses to aggression and violence towards bus drivers.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) is collaborating with Bond University researchers, service providers and other government agencies to

better understand the emerging phenomenon of transport service-related violence, and to take collaborative action in response to growing community and workplace concerns. Several government and research initiatives are underway to identify the source of risks to drivers, their patrons and the community. These interventions are informed through engagement with service-providers and key stakeholders, to drive the implementation of sustainable design solutions to improve management of aggression and violence risks on public transport.

This paper will demonstrate the benefit of multi-faceted interventions when responding to work-related violence. Initiatives designed to improve safety of drivers, patrons and to influence the broader community should consider:

- client and community expectations,
- workplace health and safety systems,
- design of client-focussed work, and
- vehicle design.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

This paper is derived from research funded by the federal government in 2013-14 under their Enterprise Connect Researchers-in-Business scheme. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of the nature and frequency of crime and disorder on urban buses and to assess current crime prevention measures, given the scarcity of Australian research into this problem. The research team was partnered with a local private bus company, the state government transport division, a workers' union and a peak transport industry body. The study utilised a multi-method research design including focus groups, surveys and interviews with bus drivers and industry stakeholders, analysis of reported incidents, a series of observational sessions on buses using a web application specifically designed for this purpose, along with analysis of CCTV footage of violent and uncivil behaviour on-board (Lincoln & Gregory 2015).

PRESENTER BIOS

Shane Stockill is a Principal Adviser in the Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics Group, at WHSQ. Shane is a registered psychologist with qualifications in occupational health and safety and psychology from Griffith University. Shane has held strategic and operational roles, aimed at building industry capacity to systematically manage psychosocial risks at work, including bullying, stress, fatigue, and client aggression and violence. Shane's current role includes project design, implementation and evaluation, improving stakeholder engagement, and providing technical support to assist organisations respond to their work health and safety duties.

Robyn Lincoln is Assistant Professor in Criminology at Bond University, Gold Coast, Australia. Her research and publications have centred on runaway and homeless youth, violence in Aboriginal communities, fraud by medical practitioners, forensic interviewing techniques and wrongful convictions. She recently completed two federally-funded research projects on the consequences of naming Indigenous youth involved in justice proceedings and a year-long industry-partnered study to examine violence against urban bus drivers. Contact: rlincoln@bond.edu.au; +61 422 786 992